

## PREVENTING BULLYING IN THE WORKPLACE IN THE LOGISTICS INDUSTRY

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Bachelor's Thesis

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Date of approval: 10 April 2017

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Bachelor's Program in International Business

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<b>Title of thesis:</b> Preventing bullying in the workplace in the logistics industry
<b>Date:</b> 10 April 2017
<b>Degree:</b> Bachelor of Science in Economics and Business Administration
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<b>Objectives</b> The main objective of this study was to find out how can bullying in the workplace be prevented in the logistics industry. <b>Summary</b> This paper studies how can bullying in the workplace be prevented in the logistics industry. The research was done by analyzing primary information that was collected by interviewing two managers and two workers from the logistics industry, and then applying the findings into the literature review about preventing bullying in the workplace. The research found out that the bullying can be prevented by co-operation of workers, superior and HR. Most importantly, HR should create the rules towards bullying within the workplace, superior should control bullying and learn the rules and workers should learn the rules and report the bullying up. In addition, it is important that the information about bullying go from the workforce all the way up to the HR. This study is significant because the area of bullying in the logistics industry is still unknown, the size of the industry is big (for example 6% of the working capital in Finland) and the effects of bullying on employees and organization are clear. Bullying in the workplace can for example reduce the profitability of a company. <b>Conclusions</b> This study suggested that bullying in the workplace should be prevented by the HR, superior and workers. The HR should concentrate on informing the superior about the legal tools in which bullying can be prevented, procedures that can be used to prevent and control bullying and the flexible work environment which basis have been decided by the HR. If necessary, the HR should also control bullying if it has been severe. The superior should train the information given from HR to the workers, control mild bullying and report the HR all bullying activities. The workers should report the bullying to the superior and if the superior is the bully, then the information about bullying should go straight to HR.
Key words: Preventing bullying in the workplace, Bullying in the workplace, Logistics industry <b>Language:</b> English
<b>Grade:</b>

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background and research problem

Workplace bullying has received academic attention since the 1970s and the attention has been increasing in the scholarly literature during the last two decades. The first person that is referred to in various studies is Brodsky. He wrote a book “The harassed worker” in 1976 in which he told and described the stories of people who had been bullied in different workplaces. These people had suffered from systematic, long term harassment of their colleagues and superior (Einarsen and Matthiesen, 2010). Even though there are many studies concerning bullying in the workplace, the area of workplace bullying in the logistics industry is still unknown.

This is alarming because according to Suomen huolinta- ja logistiikkaliitto ry, (2017) there are around 22,000 companies that employ around 120,000 employees in the logistics industry in Finland, which is around 6% of all working people in in the country. Therefore, it can be said that the industry is important part of the Finnish economy. Furthermore, the process of preventing bullying in this industry should be studied because as Rajalakshmi and Gomathi (2016) stated, workplace bullying has an effect on both the employee and organization. Workplace bullying can for example have an effect on employee productivity, employee motivation and organizational profitability.

### 1.2. Research objective and question

The research objective is to explore the process of preventing bullying in the workplace in the logistics industry. This study finds out the general process of preventing bullying in the workplace in this particular industry by connecting the earlier academic studies of bullying in the workplace with the findings of the primary research of bullying in the logistics industry. The purpose of this study is to answer the question: how can bullying in the workplace be prevented in the logistics industry? This will be done by comparing the findings of the literature review to the primary research. The primary research will fulfill

the literature review and give a broad understanding of the common process that should be done within an organization when preventing bullying in the workplace in this particular industry.

## 2. Bullying in the workplace in logistics industry

### 2.1. Definition

The term “harassment” has been used to describe workplace bullying. In his research Brodsky (1976) said that workplace harassment is repeated and persistent attempts by someone to torment, wear down, frustrate, or get a reaction from someone else. In addition, workplace harassment is treatment that persistently provokes, pressures, frightens, intimidates or otherwise causes discomfort in another person. However, there are different concepts that are used to describe workplace bullying. In his research Einarsen (2010) stated that in Scandinavia, the term “mobbing” is commonly used to describe workplace bullying. He defined mobbing as “all situations where a worker, supervisor, or manager is systematically and repeatedly mistreated and victimized by fellow workers, subordinates, or superiors”.

Term ‘bullying’ has also been used to describe this act. Adams (1992) defined bullying as “persistent criticism and personal abuse in public or private, which humiliates and demeans a person”. When including the word “workplace” into Adam’s definition, bullying in the workplace can be defined as a persistent criticism and personal abuse in public or private, which humiliates and demeans a person in a workplace. The problem of Adams’ (1992) and Einarsen’s (2010) definitions are that they do not take into consideration whether the bullying is occurring once or if it is continuous.

Einarsen and Matthiesen (2010, p.205) took this aspect into consideration in their study. According to them bullying in the workplace can be summarized as the following: “One or more employees systematically and over a long period of time perceiving to be on the receiving end of direct or indirect aggression in the workplace, in a situation in which the person(s) exposed to the treatment has difficulty in defending themselves against this treatment”. The fact that timing is included in Einarsen and Mathiesen’s definition makes

their definition more accurate one. Therefore, this definition will be used to describe bullying, harassment and mobbing in the workplace in this study.

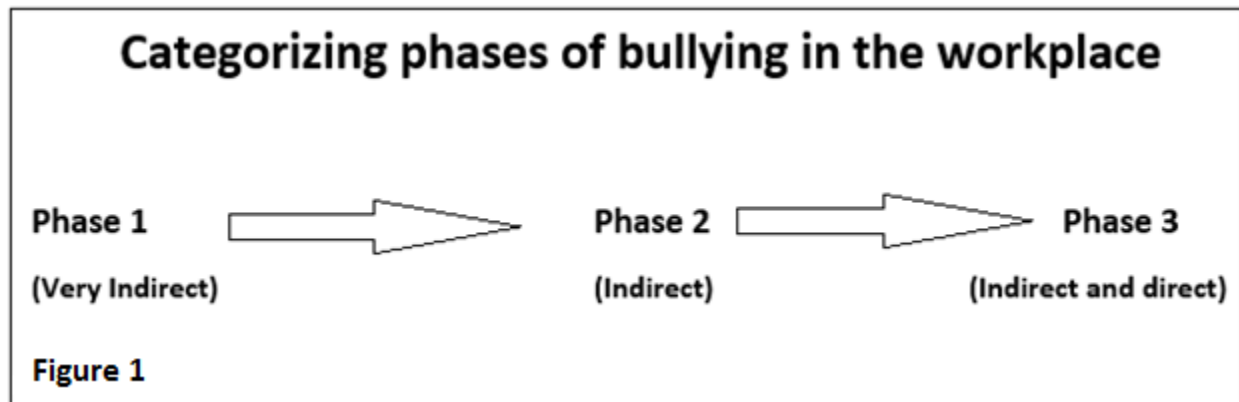
Furthermore, this study connects workplace bullying in the logistics industry. According to Suomen huolinta- ja logistiikkaliitto ry, (2017) the purpose of the logistics industry is to make sure that different products and material are stored, packaged, transported, shipped and delivered from the seller to the buyer.

## 2.2. Categorizing different ways of bullying

In general, workplace bullying can be divided into two different types of bullying; direct and indirect (Einarsen and Matthiesen, 2010). In addition, direct bullying can be divided into physical and mental bullying. Direct bullying is a form of bullying where the act is done towards the victim. Direct physical bullying means for example hitting the victim while direct mental bullying can be name calling.

Indirect bullying is bullying that is done behind the victims back. For example, leaving someone out of the group or name calling the victim with someone else. In a workplace, the most common forms of bullying are direct mental bullying and indirect bullying (Einarsen and Matthiesen, 2010). In their study Barling, Dupre and Kelloway (2009) stated that physical bullying in a workplace can be defined as workplace violence. Kelloway and Schat (2005) defined workplace violence to be forms of aggression that include behaviors that are meant to cause physical harm to the victim.

Bullying in the workplace can also be categorized into different phases. According to Björkqvist (1992) there are three different cases in which workplace harassment can be divided into. In the first case, the bullying is hard to pinpoint and it can be very indirect and discrete. In the second case, victims have been left out of the group, humiliated in public and, generally, they are employees that are commonly laughed at to. In the third case, both physical and mental abuse appears towards the victims. According to Björkqvist when the bullying begins, it begins at the phase 1. The longer the bullying continues, the more severe it becomes and eventually the bullying will reach the phase 3.



Björkqvist's study shows that the division of bullying into direct and indirect bullying is not the only way in which bullying can be categorized. The reason is that bullying can appear in different ways in a workplace and, sometimes, the indirect and direct bullying can appear at the same time as well. Another way to categorize bullying is to categorize it in different phases. Figure 1 'Categorizing phases of bullying in the workplace' summarizes Björkqvist's findings. It also shows that the more severe the bullying gets, the more direct it gets and, eventually, workplace aggression (direct bullying) will appear.

### 2.3. Institutionalized bullying and environmental culture affecting it

Liefooghe and Davey (2010) argued that the overall understanding of bullying at work has become institutionalized. They also state that bullying at work is a powerful organizing discourse and it is closely institutionalized in different organizations. This means that bullying has become a standard in organizations because it has been there for so a long time. This leads to a situation where it is difficult to improve the organizational environment because bullying is already a part of it. As Liefooghe and Davey summarized this argument in their research: "institutionalization allows organizations to take the nature of bullying for granted" (2010).

According to this study, the longer the bullying continues, the harder it is to prevent it in the future. When comparing this study to figure 1 in section 2.2., the closer the phase of bullying is to phase 1, the easier it is to prevent bullying in the future. However, Liefooghe and Davey (2010) also argued that the process where the institutionalization takes place differs among different organizations. They said that this process is "no means smooth". There is not just one way in which bullying becomes institutionalized. This is because

some organization members who resist and protest the unfair practices can ambush and change the process.

Liefooghe and Davey (2010) supported this argument by saying that the process of institutionalization of bullying in the workplace is not as secure as it may seem to be mainly because the dignity at work can be protected by the legislation, academics, managers and the employees. Workplace bullying – and especially its prevention, is part of the dignity at work and it should be taken into consideration.

But what is the factor that leads to a situation where bullying is part of the everyday work life and has become institutionalized? It has been said that the work environment has a crucial effect on the occurrence and frequency of workplace bullying. Baillien, De Cuyper and De Witte (2009) argued that insecurity is more common in an organization in which negative organizational environment exists. They also said that the negative work environment increases the frequency of bullying. For example in a climate where rumors, rivalry and gossip are part of the everyday work life, there will be more workplace harassment. Therefore, it can be said that the institutionalized bullying, organizational environment, job insecurity and bullying in the workplace are connected to each other. In an organization where negative organizational environment exists, there is more insecurity and more workplace harassment. In addition, these factors can lead to institutionalized bullying.

Pilch and Turska (2013) found out more specifying factors that increase the frequency of workplace harassment. They suggested that in addition to the issues regarding work environment itself such as a chaotic and unpredictable work environment there are also other factors that are related to the work environment and can increase the frequency of bullying. They said that reduced work control, role conflicts, work changes, pressure at work, performance demands and destructive management style and employee's low morale standards can increase the frequency.

Pilch and Turska (2013) also suggested factors that can decrease and prevent the bullying. They argued that the more flexible the organizational culture is the less workplace harassment will occur. An organizational culture with high flexibility is a culture



that has a friendly atmosphere and lots of teamwork. In addition, a flexible organizational culture supports creativity, innovativeness and entrepreneurship characteristics in employees.

On the other hand, an organizational culture with high hierarchy seemed to increase the frequency of workplace harassment. Pilch and Turska (2013) stated that an organizational culture with high hierarchy can increase the frequency of bullying because it has high degree of formalization, control and the necessity to rivalry in order to overtake a higher position in the organization. In other words, the more freedom there is the less work harassment will occur and vice versa.

### 3. Preventing bullying in the workplace

#### 3.1. Identifying the victim

As said in section 2.3. 'Institutionalized bullying and environmental culture affecting it' insecurity at work can increase the workplace harassment. When employees are insecure, they become easy, safe and legitimate targets for bullies. The reason why job insecurity may have an effect on the frequency of bullying is that job insecurity may be a signal of weakness. It is said that weakness is one of the most important factors of the process that leads to bullying within an organization (Baillien, De Cuyper and De Witte 2009). There are also other studies that discuss bullying and personality. Pilch and Turska (2013) found out that also lack of social skills, low or unrealistic self-esteem, overachieving and aggressive communication have an effect on becoming a target of workplace harassment. According to this study, personal traits have an effect on becoming a target of workplace bullying.

Aquino and Lamertz (2004) stated that there are two different types of victims: passive and aggressive. Passive victim is the one with low self-esteem, anxiety and low social skills. Passive victims are vulnerable and this vulnerability makes them easy targets. Vulnerability can be seen as a sign of weakness and this supports Baillien et al. (2009) argument that signs of weaknesses can increase the frequency of bullying. The second type of victim, the aggressive one, is a provocative person with an unrealistic self-esteem

or aggressive attitude. This causes irritation in other employees and can lead to workplace harassment. Aggressive victims become targets of bullying because they are the ones that are unpopular within the organization. When a high number of employees have negative attitude towards them, they become easy targets. Pilch and Turska's (2013) arguments support this as they said that victim's unrealistic self-esteem and aggressive communication can increase the frequency of bullying.

In addition to personal traits and the different types of victims, Einarsen and Skogstad (1996) said that the long lasting victims are attacked more frequently than the new victims. What can be said from Björkqvist's (1992) study and figure 1 discussed in section '2.2. categorizing different ways of bullying' is that the frequency of the first phase is the smallest and the frequency of the third phase is the largest. In other words, the more severe the bullying gets, the more frequently it will appear. Therefore, it can be concluded that easier targets are attacked more than the other workers. This finding makes it clear that it is important to know the common types of victims in order to prevent workplace bullying because these personal types are usually the ones that are attacked more frequently.

### 3.2. Identifying the bully

But what makes an aggressive employee and are the stereotypes important to know when preventing workplace bullying? Samnani and Singh (2015, p.547) argue that "it is also important to understand the perpetrator of bullying, how the characteristics of the target and perpetrator interact, and the work climate in the form of organizational policies and practices". In their opinion it is also important to know the characters of a typical bully because the typical characters give an overall understanding of the typical situation of workplace bullying.

Barling, Dupre and Kelloway (2009) summarized the type and character of a workplace bully in their research. They found out that males tend to be more violent and aggressive in a workplace than women. Another aspect they found out was that personal anxiety and sadness can be factors that lead to an employee becoming a bully. When people feel anxious, it can be easier for them to target the bad feelings towards co-workers. In addition to anxiety and sadness, they found out that aggressive history explains

workplace harassment. When people are aggressive and violent in the free time, they are more aggressive in the workplace as well. An interesting factor they also found out was that low self-esteem seems to have positive correlation with workplace harassment. As mentioned in section 3.1. 'Identifying the victim', Pilch and Turska (2013) said that low self-esteem can also be a typical characteristic of a victim.

Mental issues are not the only ones that have positive correlation with workplace bullying. Barling, Dupre and Kelloway (2009) found out that the more the bully spends time with the victim, the more frequently the bullying will appear. However, age, race and socioeconomic status showed no correlation with bullying in the workplace (Barling & Dupre & Kelloway, 2009). This means that demographic variables have marginal effect or does not have an effect on the process of becoming a bully.

According to this research, the variables that have the most effect on the process of becoming a bully are workplace experience and personal variables. This suggests that these two variables are the ones that the Human Resources (HR) and superior should concentrate on when making the policies and procedures towards bullying. Especially, the workplace experiences is the one variable that the HR and superior can have an effect on when discussing the organizational environment within the organization because they are responsible for its policies and procedures.

In addition, according to Aquino and Lamertz (2004) there are two types of bullies that the superior should concentrate on in the everyday work life: domineering and reactive bully. Domineering bullies are employees who bully in order to show their power, domination and control in the workplace. Whereas, reactive bullies react violently and aggressively in different social standard changes within the organization. When the superior know the typical types of bullies it is easier for them to monitor bullying.

### 3.3. [Impact of leadership](#)

Nielsen (2012) studied the impact of leadership in the logistics industry among the biggest shipping companies in Norway. He found out that a passive and ineffective leadership styles have positive correlation with workplace harassment and on the other hand an active and effective leadership styles have a negative correlation with the topic. This

should be noted within an organization because the leadership style has an effect on the occurrence of workplace harassment. Samnani and Singh (2015, p. 546) summarized this claim by saying that “Moreover, managers should pay close attention to the work climate, along with the organization’s policies and practices related to power, equal opportunities, and discrimination to ensure that bullying behavior is not being indirectly encouraged”.

Baillien et al. (2013) found out three objects for the management and superior to keep in mind when preventing bullying in the workplace in an organization:

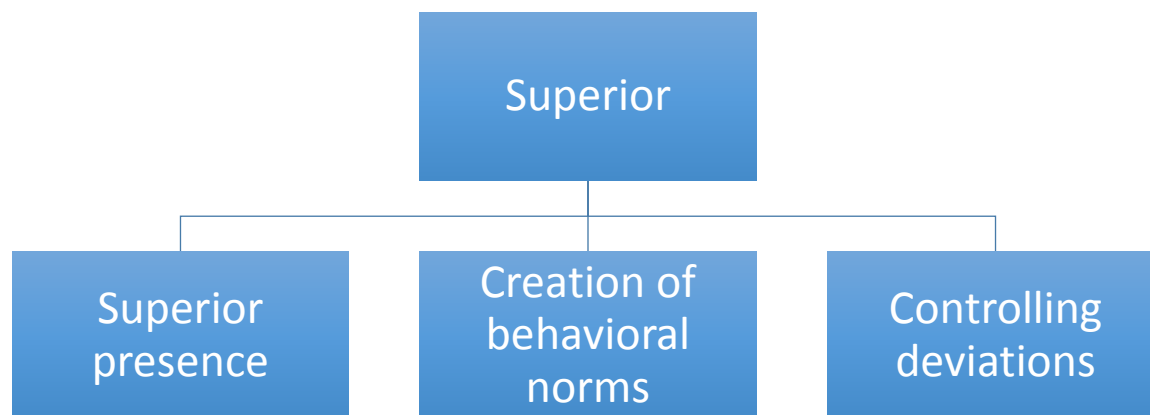
1. Superior should be aware of the situations which task-related, conflicts lead to personal conflicts and this escalation can afterwards convert into bullying in the workplace.
2. Superior should take care of task conflicts because they can turn into workplace bullying.
3. Superior can invest in introducing healthy conflict behavior within the organization and amongst the employees.

Therefore, the superior should know how the bullying is usually occurring, how to react and control bullying and how to introduce the workers healthy conflict behavior. In addition, Johnson (2015, p.2389) stated that “workplace bullying could be prevented through managerial presence, through the creation of behavioral norms and by controlling deviations of these norms”. According to this study, the management should be aware of the workers behavior in order to prevent bullying. Johnson says that this can be done by the presence of the management in everyday work life. This way the superior can monitor and point out misbehavior among the employees. With creation of behavioral norms she means that the management should teach and tell the employees the norms in the organization concerning workplace bullying. By control she means that the misbehavior should be noticed early and there should be a reaction by the management when bullying is occurring.

Both, Baillien et al. and Johnson suggested that the superior should be the organ in an organization that controls bullying and creates the behavioral norms. In addition, both

argued that it is crucial that the superior is aware of the bullying and knows the appropriate methods when reacting to bullying. However, the difference between these two studies is that Johnson also pointed out that the presence of the superior is important when preventing workplace harassment. Figure 2 shows Baillien et al. and Johnson's findings on preventing workplace bullying through the acts of management. Figure 2 concludes that the general ways in which the management can prevent bullying in the workplace is by superior presence, creation of behavioral norms and controlling deviations.

Figure 2: Preventing workplace bullying through managerial actions.



HR have also be argued to have a role in preventing bullying in the workplace. Cowan and Fox (2015) said that it is HR's responsibility in an organization to act as a liaison between employees and superior and a moderator when disagreements and disputes occur. In addition, HR should enforce the policies and procedures concerning workplace bullying in an organization.

However, Cowan and Fox (2015) also found out that HR's perspective towards bullying is sometimes limited. They wrote that HR can identify and label bullying but it has limited power when the bullying is actually occurring. Therefore, the HR is a key player when preventing and planning to prevent bullying beforehand. HR is an organ that is part of prevention but it is not that close to employees what comes to prevention of bullying. In other words, HR has to concentrate on the bigger picture concerning bullying in a workplace. This includes creating procedures towards bullying and flexible work

environment as it was stated in section 2.3. ‘Institutionalized bullying and environmental culture affecting it’. Whereas, superior should be the organ that monitors, controls and reacts on bullying.

#### 3.4. Legal tools to combat workplace harassment

Legal tools can be also used by the HR and superior when preventing bullying in a workplace. Bible (2012) introduced four different general legal tools to combat workplace harassment:

Bible suggested that the law should use preventive measures to reduce the amount and frequency of bullying within an organization. This argument is there to make it possible for the HR and superior to measure and reduce bullying. The law should also provide incentives for the employees that use self-help after being bullied and provide relief and compensation for the victim so that when the target returns to work, he/she can be sure that the bully has been removed or reformed. These points make it easier for the victim to recover from bullying. Finally the law should assure that the bullies are being punished for misbehavior. When the bullies are punished for bullying they are less likely to continue the behavior in the future.

Figure 3: Legal tools to combat workplace harassment.

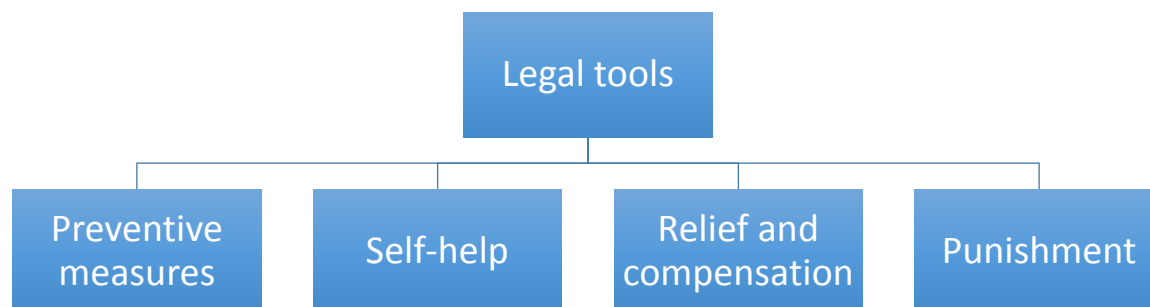


Figure 3 illustrates Bible’s arguments and shows the four ways in which HR can have an effect on bullying through legal tools. These are the general tools that the HR should keep in mind when discussing the procedures towards bullying. However, the exact laws vary

between different countries and the exact national laws concerning bullying have to be taken into consideration when applying this model in the real life.

### 3.5. Conceptual framework: The role of HR and superior in preventing bullying in the workplace.

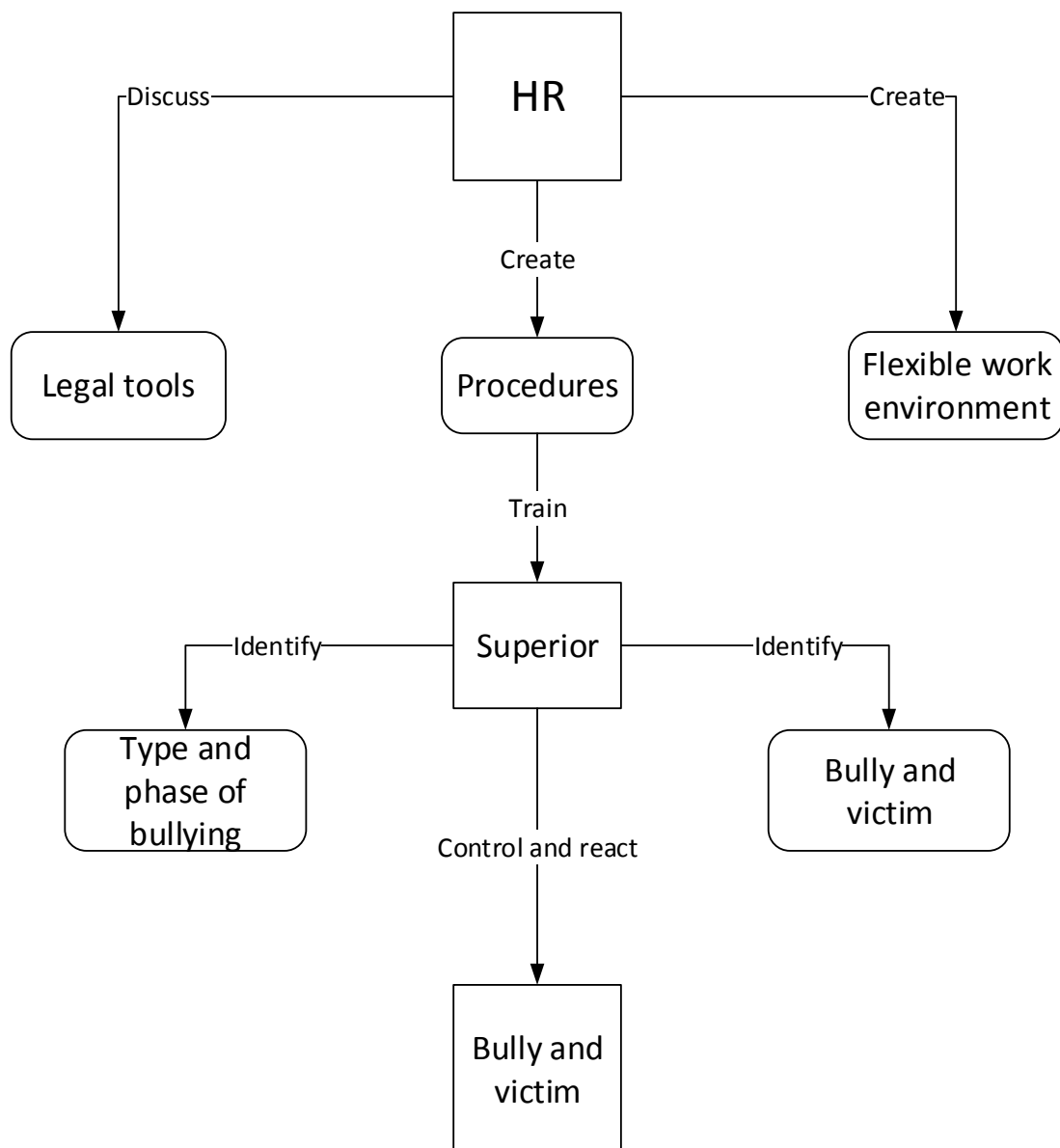


Figure 10: The role of HR and superior in preventing bullying in the workplace

This conceptual framework summarizes the findings of the literature review and gives an overview of the process of preventing bullying in the workplace. When preventing bullying in the workplace, the HR should concentrate on three aspects

1. The HR should discuss the legal tools that were stated in section 3.4. in figure 3 'Legal tools to combat workplace harassment'. As Bible (2012) wrote, the law should include preventive measures for the HR and management, self-help, relief and compensation for victims and punishment for bullies.
2. The HR should create a flexible work environment and organizational culture as Pilch and Turska (2013) suggested (section 2.3. 'Institutionalized bullying and environmental culture affecting it'). As they said, the work environment and organizational culture should support friendly atmosphere, teamwork, creativity and innovativeness. On contrary, the HR should keep in mind that as Baillien, De Cuyper and De Witte (2009) stated, negative work environment may increase the frequency of bullying. In addition Pilch and Turska (2013) said that high hierarchy, chaotic and unpredictable work environment, reduced work control, role conflicts, work changes, pressure at work, performance demands and destructive management style can lead to higher frequency of workplace harassment.
3. The HR should create the procedures towards bullying and train these procedures to the superior. As Cowan and Fox (2015) argued, HR's ways of preventing bullying in the workplace is sometimes limited (section 3.3. 'Impact of leadership') and while HR should be concentrating on the bigger picture the superior should be the organ that executes the procedures when bullying is occurring within a company.

When the management have been trained they should be able to identify the type and phase of bullying as figure 1 'Categorizing different phases of bullying' in section 2.2. suggests so that they will know how severe the bullying is and how to react on it. When the superior knows the type and phase of bullying they can control it in a more effective way. The superior should also be able to identify the characteristics of the bully and the victim so that they have a better understanding of the situation. When the management knows the characters of the bully and victim they can make actions that work effectively



in these character types. Finally, the superior should have controlling deviations towards bullying as figure 2 'Preventing workplace bullying through managerial actions' stated and the superior should also execute these deviations. The reaction should happen fast because as stated in section 2.2. the longer the bullying is occurring, the more severe it becomes (Björkqvist, 1992).

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1. Methodology overview

In this study qualitative research was used to find primary data and information to answer the research question: "How can bullying in the workplace be prevented in the logistics industry?". The research was made by interviewing 2 employees from Inex Partners Oy and 2 managers, one of them from Inex Partners Oy and the other one from Kesko Logistiikka. One employee that was interviewed had suffered from bullying in the workplace earlier in his work life and the other one had neither been a victim nor a bully.

The workers were chosen from the same company because that way the different personal types stood out from the answers since the experiences and notes concerning workplace bullying came from the similar work environment. This is important because the experiences and ideas of a victim and person who has not experienced bullying are different and both should be taken into account when preventing bullying in the workplace. Similar background helps in comparing these experiences and ideas. In addition, both workers had done individual work and group work in the same departments and, therefore, they had experienced the different work environments that exist in the company. The chosen workers worked at Inex Partners Oy, which is a subsidiary of the SOK (Suomen Osuuskauppojen Keskuskunta). The company has approximately 2200 employees in Finland ([www.inex.fi](http://www.inex.fi), 2017).

Inex Partners Oy is a valid company for this particular study because of multiple reasons. First, it is one of the biggest companies in the logistics industry in Finland and because of that, the company gives a good overview of the situation of bullying in the industry. Second, the company has plenty of different tasks for the employees and the most important aspect to be noted concerning this is that these tasks include both individual

and group work. This helps to identify whether bullying occurs differently when the employees are working together or when they work alone. Third, according to all the interviewees, bullying had been occurring in the company before.

The managers were chosen to be from different companies because as the conceptual framework in section 3.5. 'Conceptual framework: the role of HR and superior in preventing bullying in the workplace' suggests, it is superior's responsibility to control and react on bullying. In the same company, the procedures towards bullying are similar so it is better to have suggestions from different companies in order to have a broader view of the procedures that the management can use in order to prevent workplace bullying. The first manager was from Inex Partner's Oy and the second one from Kesko Logistiikka

Kesko Logistiikka is a subsidiary of Kesko Oyj and it has more than 1700 employees in Finland. It is also one of the biggest logistics companies in Finland ([www.kesko.fi](http://www.kesko.fi), 2017) and, therefore, represents the overview of the industry. Kesko Logistiikka is a valid company for this study because first, it is approximately as big of a company as Inex Partners Oy and, therefore the answers of the managers could be compared to each other so that the conclusion still represents the overview of the industry. Second, the work that is done in the company is similar to Inex Partners Oy, since they are both subsidiaries of the leading Finnish businesses of retailing groceries and similar products are being shipped with the same methods by both subsidiaries. In addition, both companies have departments where workers do both individual and group work. Therefore, the work environments are somewhat similar between these two subsidiaries. Comparability of the companies was important because this way the outcomes give a better overview of the logistics industry.

The interviews were done in Finnish which is the author's and interviewees first language. For this research the interviews have been translated into English by the author and all the interview citations are author's translations from the original Finnish interview. The reason why only two managers and two employees were interviewed was the lack of time for this particular research.

#### 4.2. Interview structure and questions

The reasons why interviews were chosen as tools to find primary information for this qualitative research were:

1. To find the deeper meaning, reasons and procedures for bullying with a structured discussion
2. To give the interviewee a certain degree of freedom when answering the interview questions
3. To gain a rich understanding of the issues concerning workplace bullying that could be compared to the literature review

Generally, the questions were decided to add primary information into the study and to fulfill the findings of the literature review. All the interviews lasted 25-30 minutes and the respondents answered the following questions and themes:

1. General information
  - Respondents age
  - Respondents gender
  - Work experience (either as a worker or manager)
  - Work description

General information gives an overall understanding of the respondents and their experiences in the field.

2. Own experiences concerning bullying in the workplace
  - Have you experienced or noticed bullying in the workplace?

The purpose of own experiences is to give this study real-life examples of workplace harassment situations. This gives a better understanding of the possible ways that the bullying is usually occurring in the industry.

3. Own actions to prevent workplace bullying
  - How have you acted or how would you act when noticing it?
  - If you have acted to workplace bullying was that the right way to act in your opinion?

- Would you act differently if the bullying were mild or severe?
- How would you find out how severe the bullying is inside the company?
- Is your contribution towards workplace bullying important and why?

The purpose of the 'Own actions to prevent workplace bullying' section is to give an understanding how can bullying be controlled by the actions of HR, superior and workers when it has been occurring. In addition this section gives an idea of the different ways that the bullying can be controlled and whether the controlling deviations should differ in mild and severe cases. Actions section gives also an idea how can superior and workers find information about bullying and why is their contribution towards preventing bullying important. The last question is there to give ideas whether the interviewees think that they can actually prevent bullying. In addition, the conceptual framework discussed the process of preventing bullying in the workplace but the actual actions are still unknown. This section gives answers how can especially employees act towards workplace bullying. The role of management and HR will be discussed more thoroughly in section 'Superior and HR'.

#### 4. Work environment and workplace bullying

- Do you think that work environment has an effect on the occurrence of workplace bullying?
- (If yes) What kind of a work environment would be favorable to prevent workplace bullying?
- Do you think that flexible work environment has an impact on bullying in the workplace?
- (If yes) How would you create this kind of a flexible work environment?

This section brings more information to the work environment topic that was also included in the conceptual framework. The purpose of this section is to find out the optimal work environment that should occur within an organization and how to create this kind of an environment. In addition, the conceptual framework suggested that in order to prevent workplace harassment efficiently, flexible work environment should exist. This section

gives ideas whether the people that were interviewed think that this aspect is important in preventing bullying in the workplace.

#### 5. Bully and victim

- In your opinion, what kind of a person is an easy target?
- In your opinion, what kind of a person is a stereotypical bully?
- Does the identification of these stereotypes help preventing workplace bullying and how?

The purpose of the 'Bully and victim' section is to fulfill the information that was collected in the literature review and to give an idea whether the people working in the industry find it important to know these stereotypes when preventing bullying. This section fulfills the information about identifying bully, victim and type of bullying that were discussed in the conceptual framework.

#### 6. Superior and HR

- Can the manager help preventing workplace bullying and how?
- How does the appearance of the manager in daily work life effect on workplace bullying?
- Can HR effect on preventing bullying in the workplace and how?

The purpose of the 'Superior and HR' section is to fulfill the information collected in the literature review for the roles of superior and HR. The idea was to find out whether the people that work in the company find it important that the superior is present in everyday work life and what are the ways for the superior and HR to prevent bullying in the workplace.

#### 4.3. Analysis

In this study, the type of analysis is qualitative because the research is also qualitative. The analysis could have been made for example by using thematic analysis, discourse analysis, or typification.

#### 4.3.1. Thematic analysis

In thematic analysis, the purpose is to identify essential themes and topics that form the data. Typically, it is the first approach to the data and gives a good overview of the phenomenon being studied. The purpose of thematic analysis is to raise the issues concerning the research question by cutting the collected information into different pieces and organizing these pieces into different themes. In other words, the relevant information concerning the research question is being found while organizing different themes and analyzing them.

The important part to be noted in thematic analysis is that different themes should be linked to the theories that have been taken into consideration in the research. The idea is that different phenomena that are found during the research are described and then the different theories are compared to the findings. The phenomena can either stand for or stand against the theories. After the comparison, the findings are being interpreted and conclusions are being made with critical reasoning (<https://koppa.jyu.fi>, 2010).

#### 4.3.2. Discourse analysis

Discourse analysis is also a qualitative analysis method and its purpose is to explore the meanings of communication, the use of language, processes and the practices that are caused by these meanings. Discourse analysis categorizes first different meaning-making processes and practices of the information that is collected and then perceives this information and compares it with the earlier hypotheses and theories. The purpose is to conclude the research based on detailed analysis by analyzing different research objects at micro and macro level.

In this particular research discourse analysis could be based on the use of words concerning bullying in the workplace. The theories and interviews could be compared and conclusions would be made based on the differences and similarities in micro and macro level. The positive aspect of discourse analysis regarding this study is that the number of interviewees is only four and discourse analysis does not need a lot of material and even a little information could bring significant findings.

However, discourse analysis does not support this study as well as thematic analysis because the ideal outcome from the research is more about finding answers for different themes that the conceptual framework introduces. The analysis of language would not find relevant answers for these themes in this study (<https://koppa.jyu.fi>, 2010).

#### 4.3.3. Typification

The idea of typification is to generalize and simplify the information into different types that illustrate the phenomenon being studied. In typification, the information is categorized according to typical characteristics and chains of events. Typification is more broad approach because of its nature of generalization. Because of this, it could be used in this particular research, since the research gives an overview of the ways of preventing bullying in the workplace in the logistics industry. However, it is more ideal to categorize the conceptual framework into different themes, for example 'workplace environment' than different types of data. In addition, typification would need more respondents in order to give meaningful discussion and conclusion for this research (<https://koppa.jyu.fi>, 2010).

Thematic analysis is an ideal analysis method for this study because the conceptual framework can be cut into different themes. Also the fact that in thematic study it is important to link the themes with theories makes this an ideal analysis method to find answers for the research question. The themes that were identified and included in the interviews were 'Own experiences concerning bullying in the workplace', 'Own actions to prevent workplace bullying', 'Work environment and workplace bullying', 'Bully and victim' and 'Superior and HR', as shown in the interview questions. The themes of the interview questions were based on the literature review, which analyzed:

- Bullying in the workplace

This topic was covered by the question theme: 'Own experiences concerning bullying in the workplace'

- Institutionalized bullying and the environmental culture

This topic was covered by the question theme: 'Work environment and workplace bullying'

- Preventing bullying in the workplace

This topic was covered by the question theme: 'Own actions to prevent workplace bullying'

- Identifying the victim

This topic was covered by the question theme: 'Bully and victim'

- Identifying the bully

This topic was covered by the question theme: 'Bully and victim'

- Impact and importance of the leadership

This topic was covered by the question theme: 'Superior and HR'

## 5. Findings and discussion

### 5.1. General information of the Interviewees

This study included interviews of two logistics workers and two managers as mentioned in section 4.1. 'Methodology overview'. The first worker that was interviewed was a former victim of bullying. He was 34 years old and he had been working in the logistics industry for 11 years as a worker. His current position was a terminal-worker for Inex Partners Oy, which includes lots of group work and earlier he had been working as a collector which includes only individual work. In this study he will be written as "W1" when analyzing and discussing the outcomes of the interview. The second logistics' worker that was interviewed was a 42-year-old logistics worker with a 15 year experience in the industry. In this research he will be mentioned as "W2".

The first manager that was interviewed was a 40-year-old manager in Inex Partners Oy. He had been a shift manager for 3 years in the company. In this analysis He will be written as "M1". The other manager was also a shift manager but in Kesko Logistiikka. He was a 33-year-old man who had been a shift manager in Kesko Logistiikka for 5 years. In this study he will be written as "M2".

### 5.2. Own experiences concerning bullying in the workplace

- Have you experienced or noticed bullying in the workplace?



W1 said that he had been a victim of workplace bullying for few years during his first years as a logistics worker. He stated that the reason for this was the fact that he was “different” and “separable” from the regular workers. He said that he was bullied both indirectly and directly but the bullying was never physical. This indicates that the bullying was in phase 2 in Björkqvist’s (1992) study mentioned in section 2.2. ‘Categorizing different ways of bullying’. He was bullied by equal workers that were doing the same job and in his situation the superior was never the source of bullying.

In W1’s opinion, the main reason for his bullying was the work environment in the company, in which the workers that were somewhat different from the ‘regular workers’ were targeted. He stated that he was not the only one that was bullied in the company and also many other people that were somewhat different had been targets of bullying. However, he also said that he had never experienced, noticed or heard of physical bullying in Inex Partners Oy and this indicates that the situation of bullying in the company is in phase 1 and 2 according to Björkqvist’s study.

M1 had not experienced bullying himself but he had seen workplace bullying that was even physical in the previous logistics company in which he had been working for in London. According to Björkqvist’s (1992) study M1 had seen bullying that was in phase 3, which is the most severe type of bullying that can happen in a workplace. In this case where the bullying was physical it was reported up from the superior and eventually the HR in the company made the decision about the further actions to stop the physical bullying. M2 had never experienced workplace bullying himself but he had seen it a lot in the company. He mentioned that there had been lots of direct shouting in Kesko Logistiikka because of frustration of the employees. This indicates that the bullying within the company had been in phase 2.

An alarming fact that W1 mentioned was that he had not only seen bullying from the equivalent workers but the superior as well. He mentioned an anonymous manager who had been verbally bullying directly and indirectly some employees within the company. W1 mentioned a situation where he had an accident at work. One day when he was

working in a department where only individual work was done and a nail went through his hand and he had to go to the doctor to get a sick leave.

When he called his manager about the accident, the manager told him that the accident was all his fault and that maybe that kind of a moron should not work for the company. After this accident W1 reported the HR about the behavior of the manager. In addition, he said that this was not the only case when there were reports of bullying on behalf of the same manager and eventually the manager was re-trained for his position. W2 said that he had not experienced bullying in the workplace but he had seen and heard of minor cases within the company. He said that he had seen some minor ragging which could be identified as minor phase 2 bullying according to Björkqvist's (1992) study.

All the interviewees said that they had either experienced or seen bullying in the workplace. This indicates that bullying in the logistics industry is common and because of this, it should gain attention within the companies in the industry. This also supports the significance of this research.

### 5.3. Own actions to prevent workplace bullying

- How have you acted or how would you act when noticing bullying?

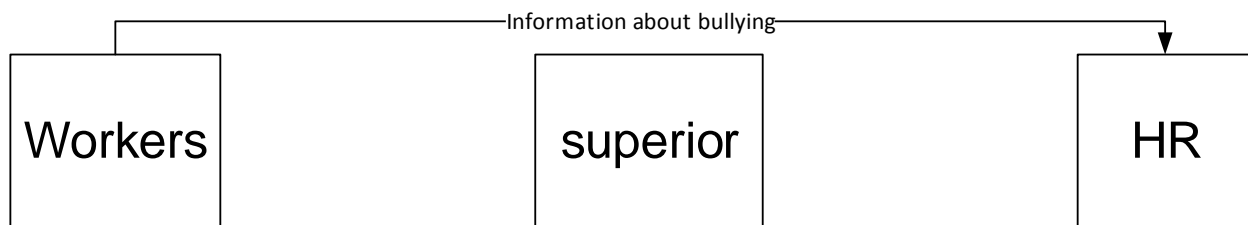
W1 said that at first he did not know how to react on bullying he was experiencing and because of this the bullying continued. He then realized that one effective way to prevent bullying with his own actions was to verbally hurt the bully as well. He said that ethically this may not be the best way to behave but this seemed to be the only way that decreased the frequency of bullying. The reason was that in order to gain the respect of the other workers W1 had to show that he can be "strong" as well. In addition, he said that hurting the bully verbally was the easy way out from the situation in which he was the victim of workplace bullying.

Sometimes W1 also experienced severe shouting which included being threatened by bullies. In these situations he went to tell the superior about his experiences so that they could not only interfere with bullying but also know that the bullying is occurring. He mentioned that this is crucially important because if the different organs of the company do not know about bullying, bullying cannot be prevented either. In other words, the

mobility of information should be discussed within the company in order to prevent the bullying. As stated in the previous section 5.2. 'Own experiences concerning bullying in the workplace', W1 had also experienced bullying from the superior.

W1 said that the best way to prevent bullying when the bully is the manager is to collect proof from multiple co-workers that work for him and report the bullying to the HR. This is because the HR have all the legal tools to prevent the bullying in the workplace W1 stated. In conclusion the process of preventing bullying is different when the bully is the manager as shown in figure 4. The difference is that when the bully is the manager, the information should go straight from the workers to the HR.

Figure 4: Data flow process when manager is the bully



W2 said that he would not inform bullying of others because in his opinion it is the victims responsibility to do. However, he also said that if he was personally bullied, he would first tell the bully to stop and if the bullying continued he would report the bullying to the superior. This indicates that W2 did not think that it is important to let the superior know about the situation, since he would only report bullying if he was the victim.

M1 said that in his position it is important to have concrete actions towards bullying so that the workforce know that the bullying is not permitted in the company. He mentioned that especially for sexual harassment there should be concrete actions because many times the bully may not understand the seriousness of his comments. Also the logistics industry is an industry where most of the workers are men and because of this the women that work there may feel powerless when they experience sexual harassment.

M2 supported M1's arguments and said that bullying should be reacted immediately when it has been reported or seen. M2 described the following steps that should be done when the bullying has been detected:

1. Talk to the victim and ask about the situation in private
2. In a sensitive way the superior should find out whether the bullying is occurring in a larger scale. This should be done by talking to the victim and other workers as well.
3. Have a conversation where the victim, the shift manager and the health and safety representative are present to discuss the situation and what has happened.
4. The shift manager and the health and safety manager should evaluate the situation in private and decide the further actions.
5.
  - a. If the bullying is severe, it should be reported to the HR.
  - b. If the bullying is mild, the decision should be made by the shift manager and the health and safety representative.

The difference between the opinions by the managers and the workforce are that the workforce seem to be more willing to handle the situation themselves while the managers feel that it is important that they get involved as well. However, when the prevention of bullying is done in the larger scale, the bullying should always be reported to the superior so that they are also aware of the situation. This makes the mobility of information about bullying an important part of the prevention.

In addition, M1 suggested that in mild cases he would make the decision. However, M2 would include the health and safety manager into the conversation when discussing the further actions. M2's procedures could work in a better way because the health and safety representatives have also a responsibility to know about the current work environment according to M2 and usually they are trained for cases like this. The outcome of the actions could be more efficient when considering the thoughts of the health and safety manager as well.

- If you have acted to workplace bullying, was that the right way to act in your opinion?

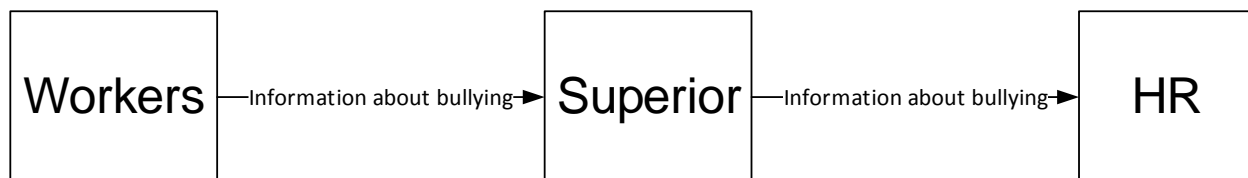
W1 mentioned that if he would experience bullying now he would not behave this way. The victim said that he “would remind the bully why we are here” and “ask if the bullying was really that necessary”. With these comments W1 meant that he would remind the bully that they are both there because of work and bullying is not part of it. The main goal with this kind of a behavior is to make the bully feel bad and stupid of himself so that he would understand the unnecessary of bullying others in the workplace W1 said.

M1 said that in the end it is the responsibility of the workforce to report on bullying because it is very hard for the superior to see it from the office. This is something that the workforce should also be aware of because everyone may not realize this. W2 said that if the victim went to tell about the bullying straight to the superior it could even increase the situation because for some people that could be a sign of weakness. However, Johnson (2015, p.2389) wrote that it is important for the superior to monitor bullying and if the victim acted like W2 suggests, it would be hard for the superior to know anything about the bullying that is occurring.

When linking W1’s and M1’s opinion into the conceptual framework it can be said that the information about bullying should go all the way up to HR from the regular workers as seen in figure 5 below, which illustrates the optimal data flow process that should occur in order to prevent the bullying within the company. The information and data from bullying should also stay constant the whole process so that the HR can have accurate information about bullying.

Figure 5

Data flow process when the equivalent worker is the bully:



W1 stated that the reason why it is important to act towards bullying is that workplace bullying is stressful to the victim. The M1 said that the actions should be made because

bullying is not right for the one that is suffering from it and everyone should have a chance to work in an environment that does not support workplace bullying.

M2 stated that his steps in reacting to bullying is the way he should act because bullying decreases the employee motivation. In conclusion it could be said that based on the interviews, it is important to have actions towards bullying because it makes the victim stressful and decreases his motivation towards work. This is an effect that can also decrease the productivity of the department where bullying is occurring.

- Would you act differently if the bullying were mild or severe?

W2 said that because of the nature of the industry being dominated by men, in mild bullying should not be reacted because he sees ragging as a normal behavior. In more severe cases he thinks that the superior should be informed. However, when asking whether W1 would act differently in situation where the bullying was mild or severe he answered that the more severe the bullying becomes, the higher he would have to report it in order to prevent the bullying. M1 also supported this and said that the more severe the bullying becomes, the higher he would report it within the organization. Both W1 and M1 also stated that the more severe the bullying is, the more severe should the sanctions be in order to prevent the bullying in Inex Partners Oy in an efficient way.

In addition, M1 said that in his position it would be important to give the bully a chance to change the behavior at first. The first thing that he would do would be to give a first warning but not take any further actions yet. M2 mentioned a clear difference between mild and severe bullying in his actions. He mentioned two different procedures that he would follow concerning this:

1. If the bullying was mild he would keep the further actions between him, the health and safety representative and the bully so that the bully could this way get a chance to change his behavior without further actions.
2. If the bullying was severe he would report the HR about the actions and discuss the further actions.

M1's procedures differed in a way that he did not mention the health and safety representative in any way. However, the health and safety representative should be informed about bullying at all times, because that person is the link from superior to HR. By letting the representative know about the event, it would be more certain that the information reached the HR as well, so that they are aware of the situation.

- How would you find out how severe the bullying is inside the company?

W1 said that the best way to find out how far the bullying have become in the company is to ask from the co-workers because usually the workers are the ones who know the most about the bullying that is occurring. M1 also supported this by saying that the workforce are the ones most likely know if bullying is occurring. M1 added that because there are different levels of superior, the closest one to the workforce should be the one to ask from if asking about bullying from the superior.

M2 supported previous arguments by saying that he would ask from the workforce about bullying. As he said: "Workers are the ones who are usually bullying and get bullied so if they don't tell about it to the superior, who would?". M2 also said that it is impossible for him to have eyes everywhere and that's why it is important that the workforce inform him about the possible bullying. This supports the argument mentioned in section 5.3. 'Own actions to prevent workplace bullying' that in order to prevent bullying in the larger scale, the superior should always be reported. In addition, W2 said that the best way to find out whether bullying is occurring would be to ask the regular workforce. The answers to this question were very similar and this indicates that the best way to find out about bullying is to ask from the regular workforce. From this statement it can be concluded that the information and data flow about bullying should begin from the workforce (see figure 6, 7 and 8 in section 6.1. 'Main findings').

- Is your contribution towards workplace bullying important and why?

W1 said that his own actions towards workplace bullying are important because the workers are the ones who create the positive or negative atmosphere in the daily work life. In addition, W1 mentioned that it is important to show example to others by not

bullying anyone else. W2 supported this argument by saying that showing example is important in his work life when preventing workplace harassment.

The management had different opinions for this topic. M1 said that his own actions are important because he has the responsibility to keep the work environment free from bullying. He said that because there are more men in the industry, it is normal that there occurs lots of friendly ragging and as long as it is friendly, he does not have the need to interfere with it. However, immediately when the ragging becomes unfriendly he would interfere and find ways to stop the bullying.

M2 said that as a superior he would inform the workforce about the procedures towards workplace bullying in the company and inform that bullying behavior is not permitted there. Another way for him to prevent bullying would be to simply talk with the workers about the work life occasionally to check how are they doing. M2 said that this is important because that way the workers know that the superior is present (more about superior presence in section 5.6. "Superior and HR"). This argument also supports the finding mentioned earlier in this section that the information and data flow of the bullying should begin with the workforce.

When comparing the answers of the management and workforce, it can be said that the management concentrates on the bigger picture whereas the workforce feel it more important to show example. In section 3.3. 'Impact of leadership' it was said that superior has the responsibility to monitor bullying in the workplace (Cowan & Fox, 2015) and the statements of M2 support this argument.

#### 5.4. Work environment and workplace bullying

- Do you think that work environment has an effect on the occurrence of workplace bullying?

W1 mentioned that in Inex Partners Oy it is somewhat normal especially in the department that has only individual work for the regular workers that the co-workers try to relief their own bad feelings by shouting to the others. This is something that can be related to the nature of regular logistics work because normally the regular work that is done in the industry is monotonous and because of this it can be frustrating at times. W1 also said



that everybody in this department know that bullying is occurring but the workers are not willing to do anything about it. This indicates that the bullying has become a standard in Inex Partners Oy and according to Liefvooghe and Davey (2010), it can be said that the bullying is institutionalized in the company (see section 2.3. 'Institutionalized bullying and environmental culture affecting it'). However, W1 also added that this is typical only in the department where individual work is done and this indicates that the situation of bullying can be different between the departments in a company.

M2 also mentioned the negative work environment. He told that the current situation in his department is very busy and because of this, the atmosphere in the department is sometimes quite frustrated. He said that this frustrated atmosphere have sometimes led to childish shouting and ragging. W2 also said that in his opinion there would be more bullying in a negative work environment. M2 and W2's answers support the argument mentioned in section 2.3. 'Institutionalized bullying and environmental culture affecting it' that a negative work environment increases the frequency of bullying (Baillien et al. 2009).

- (If yes) What kind of a work environment would be favorable to prevent workplace bullying?

W1 mentioned that in his own experience workplace bullying is occurring less in the department in Inex Partners Oy where the work is done in groups and where the workers hang out together a lot more. This supports the argument in section 2.3. 'Institutionalized bullying and environmental culture affecting it' that a work environment where there exists lots of teamwork, there will be less bullying (Pilch & Turska, 2013). M1 also said that when the work is group work there is not that much of a bullying and he had not experienced or heard of bullying in this section of the company while he had been a manager there. This also supports the previous argument by Pilch and Turska. However, in W2's opinion an environment in which the work is done in groups there could occur more bullying because the workforce are more in contacts with each other. This supports Barling et al. (2009) claim that the more the bully spends time with the victim at work the more there will occur bullying (section 3.2. 'Identifying the bully').

M1 said that one important factor is that the workforce know each other. When they know each other they not only have less barriers to talk about their concerns but also become better friends. In addition, W2's suggested that a fair and equal environment would be optimal to prevent workplace harassment. M1's point about knowing each other and W2's point about fair environment can be seen as basis of friendly environment which Pilch and Turska also mentioned in their study. They said that a friendly atmosphere can also prevent workplace bullying.

- Do you think that flexible work environment has an impact on bullying in the workplace?

M2 said that an environment where people have certain freedom can prevent workplace bullying. This supports the finding of the literature review (section 2.3.) that high flexibility decreases workplace harassment (Pilch & Turska, 2013). M1 supported this by saying that it is important to have a flexible work environment in the company

M2 added that on contrary, if the environment is not flexible there are always some people who are not happy. They might get jealous when some other people can do the work they would prefer to do. In addition, jealousy can increase the bullying inside the department. Conclusion that can be drawn is that flexible work environment decreases the frequency of bullying because when the work is done in groups there is more freedom to choose what to do as W1 stated.

The difference between the interviewees' answers and the literature review was that all the interviewees emphasized that positive and friendly environment is the key in preventing bullying what it comes to the work environment whereas the findings of the literature review suggested that the key is to have a flexible work environment. However, in conclusion it can be said that the work environment has an effect on the occurrence of workplace bullying and a positive and flexible environments are likely to decrease bullying in a workplace.

- (If yes) How would you create this kind of a flexible work environment?

W1 said that with his own actions it is hard to create flexible work environment and there should be some decisions concerning the flexibility at work by the superior. In addition, W2 supported this by saying that he does not have tools to create flexibility at work. However, M1 said that in the end the workforce create the work environment and it is their responsibility to keep it positive and friendly. So in addition to Pilch and Turska's (2013) study, it could be said that also the workforce is an important organ what it comes to creating a flexible work environment.

M2 supported M1's argument by saying that he does not have much power in making the work environment optimal to prevent the bullying. However, his reason was different from the M1's. M2 added that it is typical for the logistics industry to have a work environment where the productivity is a major concern. Because of this the work environment is not always concerned. He also said that one way to create more flexible work environment would be to hire more people so that there would be less hurry to get the work done and this decision should come from higher. All in all, this suggests that the HR should be the department to make decisions concerning the flexible work environment. These findings suggest that HR has the best tools in creating flexible work environment and this supports Cowan and Fox's argument mentioned in section 3.3. 'Impact of leadership' that HR should concentrate on creating procedures and flexible work environment what it comes to work environment.

#### 5.5. Bully and victim

- In your opinion, what kind of a person is an easy target?

W1 said that an easy target is someone who somehow is different from the others or someone who wants to have the attention of others. Having the attention means for example talking a lot about oneself and ones problems. For example complaining about work. This type of a victim can be seen as an aggressive one. In Aquino and Lamertz's (2004) study mentioned in section 3.1. 'Identifying the victim' the authors state that an aggressive person becomes a victim because they are unpopular within the organization. In addition, W1 stated that an easy target can be someone who is new in the workplace

because they are the ones who are most likely been left out of the group. W1 said that being alone can sometimes be a sign of weakness and can lead to bullying.

M1 said that a typical victim is someone who is quiet and somehow different from the others. This type of victim can be seen as a passive one in the Aquino and Lamertz's (2004) study. As they wrote that a passive victim is someone with low social skills. M1 added that the bullying itself is childish behavior and because of this the victim and the bully in a workplace can be similar as the victim and the bully in, for example, primary school. Also typical victims are people who cannot stand for themselves M1 said. This is also a sign of low social skills mentioned in by Aquino and Lamertz (2004). W2 also supported this by saying that a person who cannot stand for himself is usually the worker who gets bullied the most.

M2 had a different opinion from the others. He said that it is hard to identify the typical victim because in the end the victim can be anyone. He mentioned a possible victim that would be someone quiet who cannot stand for himself which also supports the Aquino and Lamertz's (2004) study but in his opinion it is not important to identify this because then other victims could be unconsciously ignored. In your opinion, what kind of a person is a stereotypical bully?

- In your opinion, what kind of a person is a stereotypical bully?

W1 said that a typical bully is "a coward with low self esteem and someone who wants to make oneself feel powerful on behalf of others". This type of a bully can be said to be a domineering bully as Aquino and Lamertz (2004) mentioned in their research (section 3.2. 'Identifying the bully'). They argued that a domineering bully is someone who bully in order to show their power among others.

M1 had a different opinion about the typical bully. He said that a stereotypical bully is someone who stands out from the crowd because of their loudness. Typical bully is usually someone who can be recognized miles away. However, M1 added that these are just stereotypes and in the real world bully can be almost anyone. M2 said that the typical bully is someone who first, is an egocentric person and, second, cannot handle one's own frustration without venting it to others. A factor that all the interviewees mentioned was

that typically the bully is also someone who have been bullying before as well – also outside work. M1 for example said that a typical bully probably have been bullying in his younger years since the bullying is childish behavior. In section 3.2. 'Identifying the bully' it was said that an aggressive history can explain aggressive behavior at work (Barling et al. 2009). The answers of the interviewees support this argument.

- Does the identification of these stereotypes help preventing workplace bullying and how?

When asking whether it helps to identify these stereotypes in order to prevent bullying M1 said that there's only one way in which typification of a victim and bully helps: It helps to recognize the bullying when these stereotypes are occurring in the situation. In M2's opinion, these stereotypes should not be identified because then the concentration could be centralized to these stereotypes. Because of the various forms of bullying, many cases would not be identified when concentrating only in the typical characteristics of bully and victim. W2 supported this by saying that identifying these stereotypes can only help in situations where these stereotypes exist. However, the literature review (section 3.2. 'Identifying the bully') suggested that the superior and HR should keep these stereotypes in mind when creating the procedures and policies towards bullying (Barling et al. 2009). Even though none of the interviewees pointed out this, the argument should still be discussed when creating these.

#### 5.6. Superior and HR

- Can the manager help preventing workplace bullying and how?

W2 said that in his opinion, the superior can interfere the bullying but preventing it is hard in other ways than being present because workers are usually the bullies. However, W2 was the only respondent who thought that the superior is not able to prevent bullying in other ways than being present. W1 said that the management can have an effect on preventing bullying and he mentioned that there are certain steps that the management should make in order to prevent the bullying when it is occurring within an organization. W1 said that the management should:

1. Give a chance for both the victim and the bully to be heard so that they can explain the situation in their own words.
2. If the bullying is occurring the manager should:
  - a. Tell the bully to stop the behavior
  - b. Give a written warning to the bully
  - c. Make further actions by reporting the bullying to the manager's superior
  - d. Begin legal activities

W1 said that it is important to let both the bully and the victim be heard so that the superior can have a better understanding of the situation and can decide what to do next. The further actions should be made depending on the severeness of bullying. The more severe the bullying is the more severe should the punishment be. In the steps above the mildest punishment is 2a and the most severe is 2d.

Another way that W1 mentioned was that the manager could ask both bully and the victim to sit down and settle the disagreements. He said that the manager should make the decision on which way to use to stop the bullying and prevent it in the future. The superior should think of the necessity and efficiency of the actions when making the decision. The manager should also keep in mind that the goal for these actions is to prevent the bullying in the future.

In addition W1 stated that in his opinion it makes a big difference what kind of a person the manager is. A positive person who has good people skills reduces the bullying and on the contrary, a person with bad people skills may increase it. It is important that the HR train the superior to lead people. In conclusion, when looking at the conceptual framework, when the HR is training the superior, it is important to train people skills so that the bullying can be prevented in the workforce level. This also supports the findings of the literature review. In section 3.3. 'Impact of leadership' it was stated that active and effective leadership styles have negative correlation with the occurrence of bullying and on the contrary, passive and ineffective leadership styles can increase the occurrence of bullying (Nielsen, 2012). M1 and M2 both said that having conversations with the

workforce occasionally can decrease and prevent bullying. This also supports Nielsen's statement.

- How does the appearance of the manager in daily work life effect on workplace bullying?

When asking whether the presence of the superior have an effect on preventing workplace bullying W1 said that it depends on the person as said above. A person who does not have good people skills and is somehow pushy may increase the bullying and in contrary, a person with good people skills more likely reduces the frequency of bullying. Johnson (2015, p.2389) wrote that bullying in the workplace could be prevented through managerial presence. However, this analysis suggests that it depends on how good people skills the management have. This indicates that the better the HR can train the superior in people skills the less there will be bullying in the workplace.

However, M1 said that in his opinion it is clear that the more he is around and present in the daily work, the less there will be bullying. The reason is that the superior have the power to stop the bullying if they recognize it and this power can be seen as a deterrence. In addition, W2 said that it is clear that there will be less bullying when the superior is present because he can be seen as a deterrence. M2 supported this and added that when the manager is present, also the bully knows that there would be consequences if he was bullying. In conclusion it can be said that the presence of the superior can be seen as a deterrent which decreases the occurrence of bullying and, in addition, manager's good people skills can decrease the bullying even more.

- Can HR effect on preventing bullying in the workplace and how?

W2 said that HR can have an effect on bullying when it has happened through legal tools but the prevention of bullying can be difficult. W1 also said that in his opinion, the best way for HR to have an immediate effect on bullying is to use the legal tools. HR has the best knowledge on how to use the legal tools to prevent bullying in the workplace and they should use the knowledge W1 stated. Bible (2012) wrote about the four ways in which HR can have an effect on preventing workplace bullying through legal activities (prevention, self-help, relief and compensation, punishment) (section 3.4. 'Legal tools to

combat workplace harassment'). The analysis suggests that in order to prevent workplace harassment the HR should be conscious about these four ways and the national laws that can be executed when needed.

M1 also supported the argument that HR can have an impact on bullying and he said that when the bullying has gone so far that the further actions have to be decided by HR, the actions will most likely be serious as well. However, M1 also added that one good way in which the HR can have an effect on preventing bullying in the workplace in this industry is to train the superior. For example, the procedures and legal activities concerning workplace bullying should be trained to the superior in order to prevent bullying. He added that HR could show the superior different real-life situations and what was the solution to it. So in other words the HR could give case studies to the superior and these would be discussed together. For example, answering together what was done right and what was done wrong in the particular case study.

M2 said that there are two ways in which the HR can have an effect bullying. First, they can train the superior and workforce the procedures towards bullying and second, in severe situations HR is the department that will make the decisions on how to punish the bully. Therefore, his opinions support the M1's arguments. In conclusion the answers of the interviewees support the conceptual framework in section 3.6. 'Conceptual framework: The role of HR and superior in preventing bullying in the workplace' which stated that HR's ways of preventing bullying are limited and in addition to creating a flexible work environment they should concentrate on legal tools and procedures and train these to the superior.

## 6. Conclusion

### 6.1. Main findings

The purpose of this study was to find out how can bullying in the workplace be prevented in the logistics industry. It is important to note that the process of preventing bullying does not only start from the actions of HR but also the actions of the workforce since the information flow about occurring bullying starts from the employees as said in section 5.3. 'Own actions to prevent workplace bullying'. Because of this, the conclusion has to be



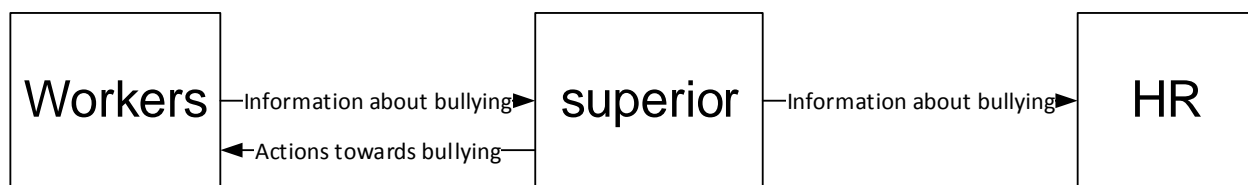
divided into two separate sections; the data flow process of the information about bullying and the process of preventing bullying in the workplace in the logistics industry. When dividing the process in these sections the research objective (to explore the process of preventing bullying in the workplace in the logistics industry) will be discussed more thoroughly and the outcome will fulfill the objective in a clear way.

#### 6.1.1. The data flow process of the information about bullying

In conclusion, as it was stated in section 5.3. 'Own actions to prevent workplace bullying', the mobility of information about bullying is an important part of the process when preventing bullying because otherwise it is hard for the superior and HR to find out about bullying. According to the research, there are three different cases of the data flow process that should be concerned when preventing workplace bullying:

1. Figure 6 below shows the data flow process of a situation where the bully is an equivalent worker and where the bullying is in phase 1 or 2 according to Björkqvist's (1992) study (section 2.2. 'Categorizing different ways of bullying'). In this situation the superior has the power and tools to stop the bullying and prevent it in the future. In this case, it is important to note that the message should go all the way to HR even though the decision about the actions towards bullying is done by the superior. The message should reach the HR because it is the department that is responsible for the flexible work environment and because of this, they should be able to have the latest information regarding the current work environment in the company.

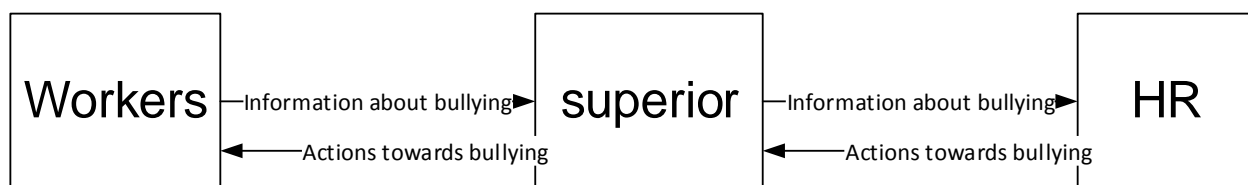
Figure 6: Data flow process when the bully is a worker and the bullying is mild



2. Figure 7 below shows the data flow process of a situation where the bully is an equivalent worker and where the bullying is in phase 2 or 3 according to Björkqvist's (1992) study. In this situation the bullying needs further actions and

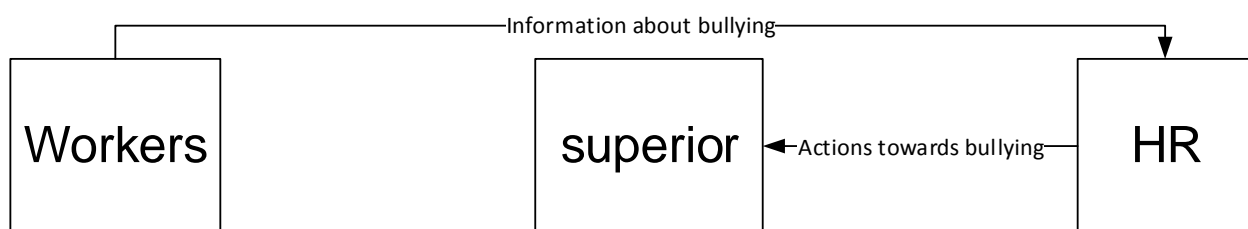
the HR has to be also present when deciding what to do. This decision should be based on the severeness of the bullying. As M2 stated in section 5.3. 'Own actions to prevent workplace bullying' that in severe situations HR should make the decision concerning the further actions. The reason why appendix and appendix have the phase 2 included is that the severeness of the punishment depends on multiple aspects for example the earlier history of the bully and the company rules.

Figure 7: Data flow process when the bully is a worker and the bullying is severe



- Figure 8 below shows the data flow process of a situation where the bully is the manager. In this situation the information should go straight from the workers to the HR in order to prevent the bullying. The HR is responsible for deciding the further actions depending on the severeness of the bullying. The HR is also responsible for executing these actions.

Figure 8: Data flow process when the bully is the manager



In addition, this study found out that the faster the bullying is reacted and controlled, the more effective the action will be. In conclusion, these three cases make the information go from the workers to superior and eventually to the HR and should be included in the process of preventing bullying in the workplace in the logistics industry.

#### 6.1.2. The process of preventing bullying in the workplace in the logistics industry.

The conclusion of this study can be seen in figure 9 'Process of preventing bullying in the workplace in the logistics industry'. Figure 9 represents the process of preventing bullying in the workplace in the logistics industry and, based on this study, by following this process the bullying can be prevented in an efficient way. Figure 9 connects the conceptual framework (section 3.6. 'The role of HR and superior in preventing bullying in the workplace') into the main findings of the thematic analysis. The mobility of information that was discussed in section 6.1.1. 'The data flow process of the information about bullying' is included in the figure. In addition, the findings that the information about legal tools, procedures towards bullying and flexible work environment discussed by the HR should not only reach the superior but also the workforce are added into the conceptual framework. According to the literature review and thematic analysis there are three departments that should be included in the general process of preventing bullying in the workplace.

The highest department to be included in the process is HR which should:

1. Find out the national law that states the legal activities that can be made towards workplace bullying and train these laws to the superior.
2. Create the procedures towards workplace bullying and train them to the superior.
3. Create the flexible work environment that does not support bullying within the organization and train the optimal environment to the superior.
4. Control bullying if it is severe.

The second department of the organization that is included in the process is the superior who should:

1. Learn all the information that the HR has given.
2. Inform the workers about the legal tools that can be used against the bullies.
3. Train workers the procedures that can be made towards the bullies.
4. Inform the workforce about the flexible work environment.
5. Control bullying when it is mild.

6. Inform the HR about all kinds of bullying that have been detected.

The third department of the organization included is the workforce who should:

1. Learn the information that the superior has given.
2. Report the possible bullying to the superior.
3. Report the bullying to the HR if the bully is the superior.

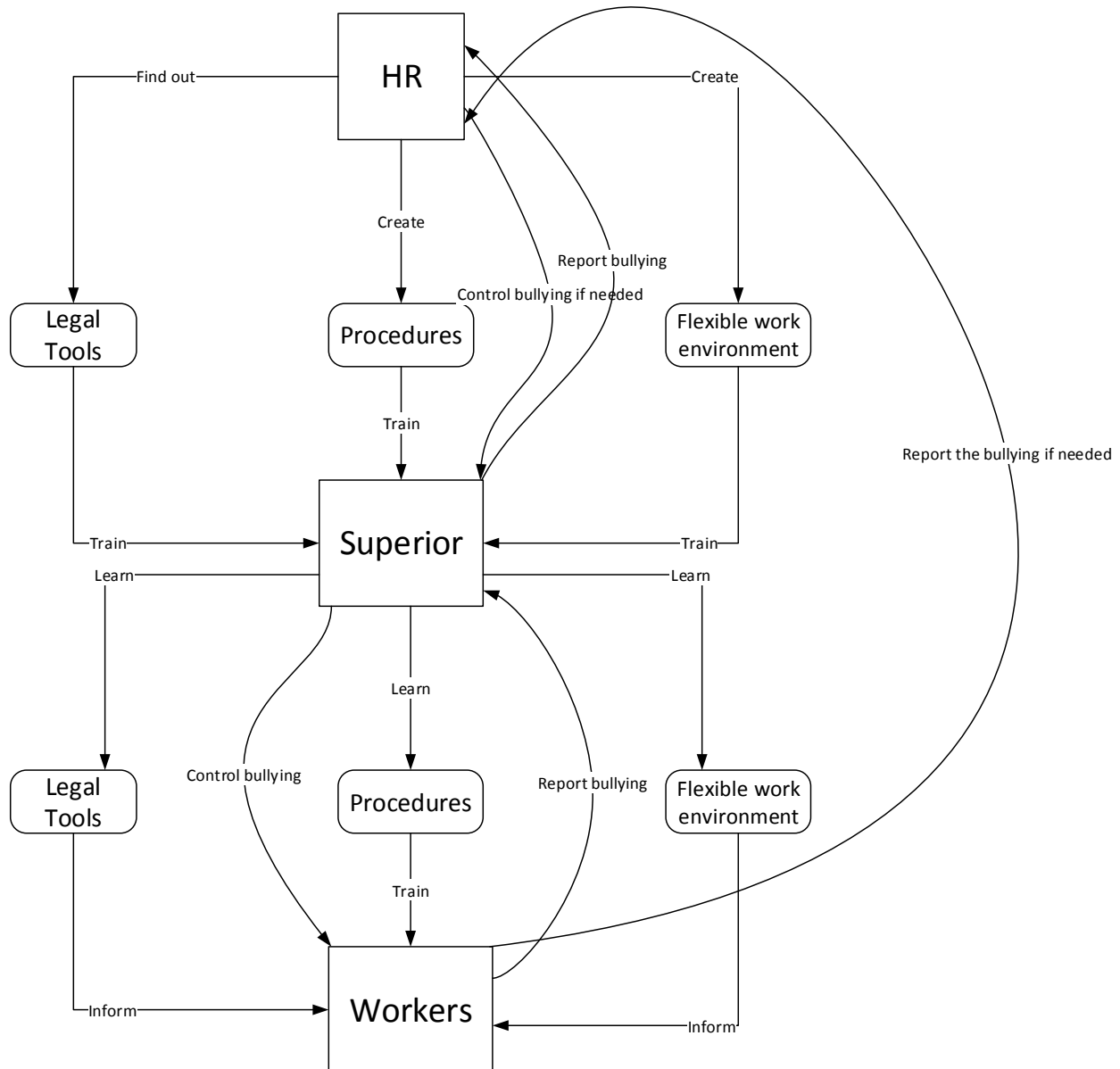


Figure 9: Process of preventing bullying in the workplace in the logistics industry

In addition to figure 9, the superior and HR should be able to identify the type and phase of bullying, the bully and victim when deciding the further actions as stated in the conceptual framework. As section 5.5. 'Bully and victim' suggested, HR should know the stereotypes of typical passive and aggressive bully and the victim when creating the procedures and policies towards bullying, and, as stated in the conceptual framework, superior should be able to know these when considering the further actions when bullying has occurred. However, the superior should also know that not all the bullies behave the same way as M1 stated in section 5.5.

When discussing the further actions the health and safety representative should be also invited in the discussion as M2 suggested in section 5.3. 'Own actions to prevent workplace bullying'. M2 stated that health and safety representative is usually someone with a training concerning workplace bullying and a responsibility to know such events in the company. Finally, it is important that managers are present in the daily work life and have good people skills as stated in section 5.6. 'Superior and HR' by W1 and in section 3.3. 'Impact of leadership' by Nielsen (2012).

## 6.2. Implications for International Business

Even though, the primary data for this research was collected within Finnish logistics companies, this study can be applied to other western countries' logistics industries as well because the nature of the industry is similar in these countries. Logistics industry is men dominated all around the world and the methods in which the companies operate and are managed are similar in the western world.

Because of the dominance of men in the industry and the cultural similarities within western countries, the ways of bullying are also somewhat similar. This indicates that the study can be used in other western countries to prevent bullying in the workplace in this particular industry. In addition, the research problem stated that the area of bullying in the workplace in the logistics industry is still unknown and bullying has an effect on both, workers and organization (Rajalakshmi & Gomathi, 2016). Therefore by following the process that figure 9 in section 6.1.2. suggests companies in the western world can increase the productivity of workers and this way the profitability of the companies can increase as well.

### 6.3. Limitations of the study

This study gives an overview of the processes that should be concerned when preventing bullying in the workplace in the logistics industry. However, the sample size of the interviewees is small because of the lack of resources and time available for this particular study. In addition, one factor that this study does not cover is that how the bullying differs in small companies versus large organizations.

Furthermore, the differences in bullying behavior among different countries in the western world is not included in the research. There could also be women part of the interviewees that could give their perspective to bullying in this industry that is mainly dominated by men. Especially, prevention of sexual harassment is an area that would need further research since the impacts of it differ from other types of bullying. Also the fact that all the interviewees were men limit the research. As M1 stated in section 5.3. 'Own actions to prevent workplace bullying' that there should be serious actions towards sexual harassment in the industry.

### 6.4. Suggestions for further research

All in all, this study gives the overall process in preventing bullying in the workplace in the logistics industry. It gives tools for companies to decrease the bullying and increase the employee motivation while making the work environment better and more flexible within an organization. To make the understanding of the workplace bullying prevention in the logistics industry broader the sample size of the interviews should be larger. This way the research would fulfill the research question: 'how can bullying in the workplace be prevented in the logistics industry' in a more accurate way. In addition, there should be some respondents from the HR department to give the process that has been analyzed their perspective as well.

To make the understanding of the research objective (to explore the process of preventing bullying in the workplace in the logistics industry) more accurate in other western countries, some interviews should be done in other countries as well. In addition, the ways in which bullying typically occurs can differ in different cultures and, therefore, this should be taken into consideration as well. There should be also women part of the interviewees

in order to include their experiences and ideas into the research as well. Especially, prevention of sexual harassment is an area that would need further research since the impacts of it differ from other types of bullying.

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